

From: Gregory Brown <[REDACTED]>

To: undisclosed-recipients;

Bcc: jeevacation@gmail.com

Subject: Greg Brown's Weekend Reading and Other Things

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Attachments: London_2012_taught_us_about_legacy,_humor_and_courage_Mike_Weise_TWP_August_12,_2012.pdf;
Five_Ways_Privatization_Degrades_America_Paul_Buchheit_NOC_August_13,_2012.pdf;
The_Romney-Ryan_Plan_for_America_EDITORIAL_NYT_August_12,_2012.pdf;
The_Romney_Package_Bill_Keller_NYT_August_12,_2012.pdf;
Understanding_the_Ryan_plan_Matt_Miller_TWP_August_12,_2012.pdf;
Voter_fraud_findings_question_ID_law_logic_TWP_August_12,_2012.pdf;
Paul_Ryan's_Fairy-Tale_Budget_Plan_David_Stockman_NYT_August_13,_2012.pdf;
Euro_zone_slinks_toward_recession_Howard_Scheider_TWP_August_14,_2012.pdf;
8_Reasons_The_Ryan-Romney_Combination_Is_Bad_For_Our_Children's_Future_Judy_Molland_Care2_August_11,_2012.pdf;
Heavier_SEC_fines_unlikely_to_dent_fraud_Investment_News_Editorial_July_29,_2012.pdf;
Defying_Gravity_R.A._Washington_The_Economist_Aug_14th_2012.pdf;
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The_real_Medicare_question_Eugene_Robinson_August_16,_2012.pdf;
Point_of_View_Wallace_Ford_August_17,_2012.pdf;
Bill_Moyers_&_Company_Confronting_the_Contradictions_of_America's_Past_with_Khalil_Gibran_Muhammad_August_17,_2012.pdf;
Truth_and_Lies_About_Medicare_EDITORIAL_NYT_August_18,_2012.pdf;
Let_the_Real_Debate_Begin_Joe_Nocera_NYT_August_13,_2012.pdf

Dear Friends....

First of all we should applaud the British for hosting a great Olympics. From a witty tongue and cheek opening ceremony to the *"partying like its 1999"* closing ceremony, the 2012 London Summer Olympics was an incredible success. **So hats off to the Britts....** *Your Olympics Rock The House....* See the article in **The Washington Post** by Mike Wise, *"London 2012 Taught Us About Legacy, Humor and Courage"* as the title sums what made the 2012 London Olympics during the past two weeks was the Greatest Show On The Planet.

WEEKEND OFFERINGS

We start with an article by Paul Buchheit in **Nation of Change**, *"Five Ways Privatization Degrades America."* The article begins; *"A grand delusion has been planted in the minds of Americans, that privately run systems are more efficient and less costly than those in the public sector. Most of the evidence points the other way. Private initiatives generally produce mediocre or substandard results while experiencing the usual travails of unregulated capitalism -- higher prices, limited services, and lower wages for all but a few 'entrepreneurs.'*

With perverse irony, the corruption and incompetence of private industry has actually furthered the cause of privatization, as the collapse of the financial markets has deprived state and local governments of necessary public funding, leading to an even greater call for private development.

As aptly expressed by a finance company chairman in 2008, *"desperate government is our best customer."*

Please take a read as the article pokes holes in the conservative assertion that Government Is Bad and Privatization Will Make Things Better.... Whereas I believe that most Privatization are giveaways to insiders with taxpayers receiving nowhere close to best/market prices possible.....

As many of you know, I believe that Republicans are coordinating an effort to suppress the vote in Democratic areas -- and that this is truly un-American and opposite to the principles of democracy. Please take a read of **The Washington Post** Editorial, *"Voter Fraud Findings Question ID Law Logic."* It points to a new nationwide analysis of more than 2,000 cases of alleged election fraud over the past dozen years shows that in-person voter impersonation on Election Day, which has prompted 37 state legislatures to enact or consider tougher voter identification laws, was virtually nonexistent.

The analysis of 2,068 reported fraud cases by News21, a Carnegie-Knight investigative reporting project, found 10 cases of alleged in-person voter impersonation since 2000.

With 146 million registered voters in the United States, those represent about one for every 15 million prospective voters. This clearly shows that the Election Fraud Issue and new ID laws are really Voter Suppression and a disgrace to the principles of democracy.

In Howard Schneider's article in **The Washington Post**, *"Euro Zone Sinks Toward Recession"*, as the European economy shrank over the past three months due to slowing German growth and moribund conditions in France pushing the entire region to the doorstep of recession.

The latest data from Europe appears to confirm that the region — and particularly the euro zone — is entering a long-feared double-dip recession and a new downturn that is taking shape before the wounds from the 2008 crisis have fully healed. This will make it harder for the European nations to contain already-high levels of public debt and for banks to cope with increasing amounts of bad loans, as well as more difficult for the stronger nations, such as Germany to back the region's various bailout and crisis funds without affecting their own standing in world markets.

At the same time it appears that the United States has skirted the worst of Europe's troubles. While growth in the United States has slowed, exports to Europe are running ahead of last year and an unexpected jump in July retail sales gave some hope that U.S. households may strengthen their contribution to the country's tepid expansion. As such, things aren't truly as bad in the US compared to the European Union.

Please take a look at **Investment News'** Editorial, *"Heavier SEC Fines Unlikely to Dent Fraud"* as it points out that you can't fine someone unless you catch them — most securities fraud goes undetected — and for most Big Banks & Big Businesses, fines are just the cost of doing business..... ***So unless at the demand of citizens, politicians are willing to fund more enforcement, push stronger regulatory oversight and are willing to criminalize white collar fraud it will continue.***

While the world is focus on the economic woes in Europe and Americans are consumed with the presidential politics and a weak economy, few people have looked at Japan, which has government debt in north of 230% of GDP, the government continues to borrow about 9% of GDP each year, and yet the yield on 30-year government debt is under 2%. Obviously, Japan can't keep this 'house of cards' can't going for much longer.

The key to this feat is that the overwhelming majority of Japanese government bonds are held domestically, most of it by commercial banks and insurance companies. And banks are encouraged to hold government bonds to meet capital adequacy requirements, and insurance and pension funds be herded toward government debt. This model is doomed to end and when the end comes, Japan's political system will have to figure out how to distribute the losses. It could try to solve its problem through large increases in taxation, aggressively reformed their banking sectors, liberalizing their economies, and deploy effective monetary policy. They could also try to rein in growing pension costs and increase inflation, which would effectively transfer resources from old retirees to younger workers and businesses. Finally, Japan might also opt for and stumble into default. And as **The Economist's** article points out, sooner or later the Japanese economy won't be able to continue to defy gravity. See the attached article in **The Economist**, '*Defying Gravity.*'

One of the biggest political arguments in America is the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act, (*often referred to as Obamacare*) which makes health insurance mandatory. Switzerland requires everyone to purchase private health insurance, a system that seems to work efficiently while keeping costs under control. Americans should look at the Swiss system because Switzerland's healthcare model successfully delivers much of what the U.S is trying to achieve: universal coverage through mandatory private insurance. Unlike most European countries, the Swiss don't have socialized medicine, though the government regulates the insurance industry and defines what health services must be offered — a generous package that includes doctor's visits, hospital stays, medications, physical therapy, physician-ordered rehabilitation, and in-home nursing care. Under this law, which went into effect in 1996 to provide equal access to healthcare, everyone has to purchase a plan from one of 92 insurers. Employers don't provide insurance, so people are free to shop around for coverage that fits their needs and not feel obligated to stay in a job solely for the health benefits it offers. See Helena Bachmann's article in **Time Magazine**, '*Switzerland Has Its Own Kind of Obamacare — and Loves It*' as it is evidence that the Obamacare structure does work..... *And this is from someone who believes that Americans should have Universal HealthCare.*

Also included is an article by Eugene Robinson in **The Washington Post**, '*The Real Medicare Question*'. In this article, Robinson debunks the latest Republican allegation that President Obama "gutted Medicare by taking \$717 billion out of it" when they know that it is not true. Like many lies, this one uses a grain of truth as raw material. The Affordable Care Act, otherwise known as Obamacare, slows the rate of growth of payments to Medicare service providers by more than \$700 billion over a decade. But no impact is felt by seniors themselves, whose benefits and costs remain the same. Medicare as we know it is a form of social insurance, a guarantee that citizens over 65 will have adequate medical care regardless of how healthy they are or how much money they have. Medicare, as the GOP wants it to be, is a voucher program that will be adequate for some seniors and inadequate for others. That Ryan Plan would eventually change Medicare into a voucher program: Seniors would be given a certain amount of money each year to buy health insurance. And if that amount isn't enough to pay for the kind of coverage you want or need — under Ryan's latest plan, you could buy a policy from a private insurer or buy Medicare from the government — you pay the difference out of pocket. According to the Congressional Budget Office, the average Medicare recipient would pay an extra \$6,500 a year. And having just spent four days in the ICU at Cedars Sinai Hospital in Los Angeles last month, which cost me almost \$50,000, not to mention follow-up care, a \$6,500 healthcare voucher paid to an insurance company who will do whatever they can to keep costs down and coverage lean, is an ugly joke in the richest country in the world.

Also included is an EDITORIAL from the **New York Times**, '*Truth and Lies About Medicare*' which starts with "*Republican attacks on President Obama's plans for Medicare are growing more heated and inaccurate by the day. Both Mitt Romney and Paul Ryan made statements last week implying that the Affordable Care Act would eviscerate Medicare when in fact the law should shore up the program's finances.*" And the EDITORIAL ends

with *"THE CHOICE This will be an election about big problems, and it will provide a clear choice between contrasting approaches to solve them. In the Medicare arena, the choice is between a Democratic approach that wants to retain Medicare as a guaranteed set of benefits with the government paying its share of the costs even if costs rise, and a Republican approach that wants to limit the government's spending to a defined level, relying on untested market forces to drive down insurance costs. The reform law is starting pilot programs to test ways to reduce Medicare costs without cutting benefits. Many health care experts have identified additional ways to shave hundreds of billions of dollars from projected spending over the next decade without harming beneficiaries. It is much less likely that the Republicans, who have long wanted to privatize Medicare, can achieve these goals."* Please take a read.....

Attached, is my friend, Wallace Ford's latest **Point of View** blog: The Teapublicans have as one of their rallying cries that it is time to "take back America". Now that the presidential campaign is moving to the gold medal round it might be time to ask, take America back from whom? And exactly who is doing the taking back anyway? Meanwhile, we have learned that, in vetting Paul Ryan for the role of vice presidential candidate, Mitt Romney reviewed at least five years of Congressman Ryan's tax returns. Nevertheless Mr. Romney and his sidekick Paul Ryan are adamant that the American people need to see only two years of their tax returns. And finally, Donald Trump continues to do an excellent impression of a broken clock by being right twice a day. He had one of those days last week.

Being a baby boomer, please understand that I am addicted to television. In addition to *'Law & Order', '60 Minutes', 'CSI', 'Bill Maher'* and *'Frontline'*, as well as new shows like *'The Voice', 'BOSS', 'Boardwalk Empire', 'Do You Think That You Can Dance'* and *'The Newsroom'*, one of my favorite shows is PBS' *'Bill Moyers & Company'*. This week's show was a repeat/encore *'Confronting the Contradictions of America's Past'* with Bill Moyer's interviewing (writer & historian) Khalil Gibran Muhammad.
<http://billmoyers.com/episode/encore-confronting-the-contradictions-of-america%e2%80%99s-past/>

I urge everyone to take time to see the interview or (*for those of you who hate television*) read the attached transcript, because learning from our racial past is crucial to addressing America's current ethnic issues, as long as we are willing to confront key contradictions in our shared history. In a conversation with Bill Moyers, Khalil Muhammad helps bring these issues to light. Muhammad heads the New York Public Library's Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, and is the author of *The Condemnation of Blackness*, which connects American histories of race, crime and the making of urban America to modern headlines.

My father use to say that *"history is re-written by the winners."* A classic example is the Declaration of Independence itself, the product of what John Adams called Thomas Jefferson's **"happy talent for composition."** How can you write that *"All men are created equal,"* without freeing your own slaves?

Jefferson himself was an aristocrat whose inheritance of 5000 acres and the slaves to work it, mocked his eloquent notion of equality. He acknowledged that slavery degraded master and slave alike, but would not give his own slaves their freedom. Their labor kept him financially afloat. Hundreds of slaves, forced like beasts of burden to toil from sunrise to sunset under threat of the lash, enabled him to thrive as a privileged gentleman, to pursue his intellectual interests, and to rise in politics. Even the children born to him by the slave Sally Hemings, remained slaves, as did their mother. Only an obscure provision in his will released his children after his death. All the others -- scores of slaves -- were sold to pay off his debts.

Behind the eloquent words of the Declaration were human beings as flawed and conflicted as they were inspired. If they were to look upon us today they most likely would think as they did then, how much remains to be done. Remember that *"All men are created equal"* did not include native Americans and women. History is usually whitewashed to keep the status quo and if keep denying the truth of our history we are destined to make the same mistakes.... **WAKE UP AMERICA**, because we can't come clean to history (past and recent), we will continue

to live in the delusion that we are anointed by "our God" to save the world and that our way is the only way, even though in the richest most powerful country in the world millions of children and elderly go hungry every night and we are no safer than Brazil, Switzerland, South Africa, Japan and Australia.....

POLITICS

With the choice of Congressman Paul Ryan as his Vice Presidential running mate, Mitt Romney has clearly signaled that he will run as a stalwart conservative ignoring the successful strategies of Richard Nixon, Ronald Reagan and George W. Bush of campaigning as far to the right as possible during the Republican primaries and then sprint back to the middle as quickly as possible the moment that the nomination is secured. To the delight of both Conservative Republicans and Liberal Democrats no one can continue to label Romney as "etch-a-sketch." As such, please takes time to read Joe Nocera's piece in the **New York Times**, '*Let the Real Debate Begin.*' And like Joe Nocera, *I too can't remember the last time I've been so eager to watch a vice-presidential debate.*

Please read the piece in **The Washington Post** by Robert Shapiro, '*Rewriting economic history against Obama.*' With the partisan political divide wider than ever, and with both parties labeling the other as dangerous, on the Republican side they are accusing President Obama of not employing solutions that they would have not supported and through Monday Morning Quarterbacking their policies would have quicken and straighten the economy's recovery..... even though it was their economic policies that caused the crisis. The article starts with, "*Two respected economic advisers to the Romney campaign launched a new line of criticism of President Obama's economic stewardship on this page this week [“Obama's faulty math; his economic arguments contradict themselves, op-ed, Aug. 16]. The case offered by Kevin Hassett of the American Enterprise Institute and Glenn Hubbard of Columbia Business School contained three bold claims. Two of the three are demonstrably wrong as matters of economics, and the other is off-point.”* And ends with, "*Now, imagine the political firestorm if the president had tried to force banks to refinance the mortgages of homeowners in danger of losing their houses or offered short-term loans to help them meet their mortgage payments until the economy recovered. The president's opponents can hardly blame him now for not taking steps that they would have blocked in any case.”*..... **For those of you only read the Cliff Notes.....**

Finally, with the Romney's choice of conservative stalwart Paul Ryan, the Republican platform is now set in stone making the 2012 Presidential Election one about choice. Included are a number of articles on Paul Ryan and how the Romney/Ryan vision..... And since I am a liberal Democrat.... The potential consequences, should Romney-Ryan win the election. If you haven't read, I urge that you take the time to read the **New York Times** EDITORIAL, '*The Romney-Ryan Plan for America*', Bill Keller's article in the **New York Times**, '*The Romney Ryan Package*', one of the architects of Supply-Side Economics, David Stockman's article in the **New York Times**, '*Paul Ryan's Fairy-Tale Budget Plan*', Judy Molland article in **CARE 2**, '*8 Reasons The Ryan-Romney Combo Is Bad For Our Children's Future*', cutting programs that currently help our young people and a list that I compiled from **MoveOn.Org** on Mitt Romney's running mate, '*8 Things to know about Paul Ryan.*'

THIS WEEK'S MUSICAL OFFERINGS

The week I would like to share several musical stories starting with my favorite rapper 2Pac ode to his mother "Dear Mama" and ending with the amazing Isaac Hayes's rendition of Jim Webb's 'By The Time I Get To Phoenix'.... I hope that you enjoy....

2Pac - *Dear Mama* - <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4rpDmqRrnaI> and <http://youtu.be/4rpDmqRrnaI>
Harry Chapin - *Taxi* <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c5dwksSbD34> and <http://youtu.be/c5dwksSbD34>
Slick Rick - *Children's Story* - <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q05DGnEio3w> and <http://youtu.be/Q05DGnEio3w>

Janis Ian - *At Seventeen* - <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ypr9oKaO-3E> and <http://youtu.be/ypr9oKaO-3E>

Frank Sinatra - It Was A Very Good Year - <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oG9YAHYe80I> and <http://youtu.be/oG9YAHYe80I>

Leigh Jones - *Cold in L.A.* - <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IRwM9WvmHg8&feature=related> and <http://youtu.be/IRwM9WvmHg8>

Isaac Hayes - *By The Time I Get To Phoenix* - <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9bbdJSW3pvM> and <http://youtu.be/9bbdJSW3pvM>

QUOTE OF THE WEEK

ENCORE: *"I'm for truth, no matter who tells it. I'm for justice, no matter who it is for or against. I'm a human being, first and foremost, and as such I'm for whoever and whatever benefits humanity as a whole."*

Malcolm X

I hope that you enjoyed this weeks offerings and wish you a great week.....

Sincerely,
Greg Brown

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Gregory Brown
Chairman & CEO
GlobalCast Partners, LLC

US:
Tel:
Fax:
St: